

**Minutes of the meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport to discuss HS2  
Buckingham Community Centre  
Thursday 30 September, 11.00am**

**Present:**

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| Rt Hon John Bercow MP                        | JB  |
| Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP                     | PH  |
| Cllr Netta Glover – Wing                     | NG  |
| Cllr Sue Polhill – Quainton                  | SP  |
| Cllr Richard Pushman – Greater Hughenden     | RP  |
| Belinda Naylor – Chetwode                    | BN  |
| Jeremy Quin – Quainton                       | JQ  |
| Penny Gaines – Quainton                      | PG  |
| Gary Eastman – Twyford                       | GE  |
| Cllr Roger Landells – Twyford                | RL  |
| Cllr Rae Sloan – Twyford                     | RS  |
| Cllr Tony Kirkland – Turweston               | TK  |
| Christopher Prideaux – Doddershall           | CP  |
| Cllr Bill Bendyshe-Brown – The Risboroughs   | BBB |
| <br>   |     |
| John Castle – Route Engineer, HS2 Ltd        | JC  |
| Miranda Carter – Environmental Engineer, HS2 | MC  |

JB opened the meeting, introduced the Secretary of State and asked him to make a few opening comments about the proposals for HS2.

*PH apologised for the late change of venue and timing but he had taken advice from the police and decided that the original venue was not suitable. The timing was changed as he has to be in London for another meeting this afternoon.*

*He outlined that there were broad economic benefits for the HS2 scheme but it was a challenge to plan and implement. He said that he had visited Twyford to see the actual route location. He was aware that there are some points where they will be able to mitigate the effect by minor adjustments to the route both vertically and horizontally. He has to balance national interest with local concerns.*

*He set out the timetable of events: the preferred route will be selected by Autumn this year, followed by the consultation period when we will have the opportunity to challenge the broad principles. The hybrid bill is expected to be put to parliament early in 2013 and is planned to be on the statute book by 2015.*

RL made it very clear to the Minister that we were very upset about the change to the venue as we had gone to considerable trouble to inform the villagers and ask them to turn up to demonstrate their views. In addition, the Wednesday copy of the Bucks Herald had printed the original time and place.

RL went on to say that there had been serious misinformation released by the DfT by moving the line and then moving it back raising the hopes of the Twyford villagers. He also asked about the proposed maintenance depot in Steeple Claydon.

*PH told him that that there were no definite plans for the depot at Steeple Claydon at present. He offered to publish the name of the HS2 Press Officer on the web site so that we could get clarity if necessary in the future.*

GE asked why the DfT had not released any information about the noise levels that should be expected. He explained that the DfT's own published documents had said that the noise generated at 300kph was unacceptable within 150m of surrounding infrastructure.

*PH explained that they were doing some studies and a seminar has been arranged by HS2 at which one of the subjects will be noise. He said that if one's property was within 50m of the track that you would be eligible for compensation.*

PG made the point that they are able to hear the current rail traffic at Quainton Railway Centre even though they are almost a mile away.

*PH said that they were looking at the noise effects from other railways and they would be doing further work.*

RS asked why the original HS2 report had said that no environmental measures had been planned for the section of track north of Aylesbury.

*PH said that there will be mitigation measures but these will be in line with the costs. He said that there will be a compensation scheme in place and it may well be cheaper to compensate those affected rather than to include mitigation measures.*

TK asked if the residents of Turweston West could relax now that the DfT had proposed the route be moved to the East of the town. He also asked if it was correct that the route would be used for freight.

*PH said that none of the route was "cast in stone" but they had accepted, in principle, the validity of moving the route to the East. He went on to state categorically that the route was not designed to be used by freight and that no freight traffic was planned.*

SP asked what assumptions had been made in the business plan regarding the loss of tourism and trade to North Bucks.

She said that if she demolished a listed building without permission, she would be taken to court but the DfT were planning to demolish 65...?? She said she was also very concerned about vibration damage.

*PH said that he wasn't sure what loss effects had been considered by the DfT but he would check. Regarding the demolition of listed buildings, he agreed that this was an issue but explained that it was unfortunate but inevitable in this sort of scheme due to route alignment.*

*JC said that he was a Structural Rail Engineer for HS2 and he could assure us that there would be no vibration resulting from HS2*

RP commented that the new Minister had significantly speeded up the timetable for the project which is now a year shorter than the time planned by his predecessor. He said that an AONB was of equal status to a National Park and that the route would have a huge impact on the Chilterns.

*PH said that the route must go through the Chilterns somewhere and that the chosen route was the least intrusive.*

BBB asked three questions:

Forecasting of passenger traffic is notoriously poor. The business case estimates for passenger numbers in the original bid for HS1 suggested that passenger numbers would reach 21.4 million by 2004 but actual numbers only reached 7.3 million.

*PH said that with regard to passenger numbers, they use the figures provided by the Rail Regulator although he admitted that the huge recent increase in budget air travel had altered the predictions.*

He said that the business case for HS2 appears to be flawed on economic, emission and passenger projections. The original report to Government by HS2 Ltd included several alternatives – the most effective being 'Rail Package 1' which can incrementally deliver a 'reasonable case' demand growth for just £2 billion, and 'Rail Package 2' which could deliver the full projected demand but not the 'surplus' or freed capacity that HS2 delivers (but which is not needed). He asked why have the alternatives not been fully evaluated as these would deliver the capacity needed at a fraction of the cost and with minimal disruption.

*PH said that the business case is continually evolving but he assured us that the preferred route will include a business case*

BBB commented on the Secretary of State's appearance on the Daily Politics show on 23<sup>rd</sup> September where he stated that:

1. He was prepared to listen to the arguments people made
2. He will deal with the points they raise
3. He will rebut these with robust evidence of the business case.

*PH agreed with this statement.*

PG said she understood that the DfT had their own department dealing with the increased use of IT to reduce travel yet no account of this seemed to have been taken in the passenger increase.

*PH said that he fully accepted the need to reduce travel but that the system was being planned to meet the future needs of the Country.*

CP was anxious to know why the DfT was in such a rush to push the process forward without doing the due diligence that seemed to be so necessary. He also asked what sort of relationship the DfT had with Railtrack as it appeared that the new line ran on top of the existing track.

*PH assured him that the new and the old tracks will run side by side.*

NG said that the EHS should be extended to cover the non-preferred routes as she had constituents who were already suffering blight.

*PH said that as the preferred route would be announced in the autumn and by focussing on this one route, they would lessen the blight on the other suggested routes. He said that they would not consider extending the EHS scheme to other than the present preferred route.*

JQ said that if the Rail Regulator had got the passenger numbers so wrong for HS1, what was the DfT doing about making better assumptions.

*PH responded by saying that there is clear evidence that traffic will increase and that the HS1 Javelin line has not yet had time to build up capacity.*

JQ asked if the Treasury had signed off that the scheme was value for money.

*PH said that cost benefit ratio was not the only criteria but agreed that the business case has to stack up. He confirmed that it is a necessary condition that the scheme delivers value for money.*

BN told the Secretary of State that she knew nothing about railways and she had had to learn a lot. She had taken advice from both Arup and W S Atkins and she told Mr Hammond that senior officers of both companies had told her that the proposals chosen by the DfT were not the best options for the Country.

*PH said that they used Arup as a consultant and that the information they were given formed only part of the evidence that they used. It was also the case that because of other factors, Arup could not be considered to be acting with impartiality. He said that Atkins were no longer acting as advisors.*

JB thanked the Minister for attending the meeting and asked him to take the time to talk to the protesters who were outside the meeting hall, to which he agreed.

The meeting was closed at 12.05pm  
Minutes by Gary Eastman